

Antelope Island Spider Festival

Funnel Weaver Spiders

Funnel weaver spiders comprise the family Agelenidae (ay-jeh-LEN-ih-dee).

This family of spiders gets its name from the **unusual webs** that they weave. Their webs look like a horizontal sheet that has a tunnel off to the side, or in the middle of the web, **often resembling a funnel**.



The spiders hide in these tunnels for both **protection** from predators, and to **surprise** unsuspecting prey that wanders into their web.

Funnel weavers are **incredibly quick** and can race out to capture prey, or disappear deeper into their tunnel in an instance to hide from predators.

Sudden movement or changes in light, like your shadow crossing their web, will cause them to dart deeper into their tunnels.

Funnel weaver's webs can be found **outside** in grass, low hanging bushes, gardens, woodpiles, etc. **Inside** they can be found in the corners of dark rooms.

Their webs can be on the smaller side, or very large covering several square feet.

Depending on the species the funnel weaver's webs can be **either sticky**, or the web **will tangle** around the prey's feet instead.

Female funnel weavers **almost never leave** their webs. Instead they wait for prey and males alike to come to them.

Funnel weaves that you see **wandering around** at night tend to be males looking for either food or a mate.

The family Agelenidae includes ~1,200 species worldwide. A little more than 100 are found in North America.

Funnel weavers quite commonly **live in very close proximity** to each other. This can lead to them preying upon each other from time to time since, like all spiders, they are opportunistic feeders.

Typical prey items for funnel weavers are smaller **insects**. Some of the more common ones include ants, flies, moths, and juvenile roaches.

Funnel weaver's **venom** is usually quick acting when administered to their prey.

Funnel weaver's belonging to the family Agelenidae, **do not have medically significant venom**. There are spiders also called funnel weavers belonging to the family Hexathelidae (hex-a-the-li-dee) in the genera *Atrax* (ah-trax) and *Hadronyche* (had-ron-ich), which are considered medically significant. These spiders are found in **Australia** and not in **North America**.

Identifying individual spiders in the Agelenidae family can be **problematic** and can only be **reliably done** by an experienced archaeologist or by microscopic inspection of the genitalia or both.

Some of the more common funnel weaver spiders in Utah belong to the genera *Agelenopsis* (ay-jeh-len-AWP-sis), *Tegenaria* (teh-jen-AIR-ee-uh), and *Eratigena* (air-uh-TIH-jen-uh)

The *Agelenopsis* spp. Spiders (grass spiders)



tend to be some of the more common funnel weavers people in Utah encounter. They are commonly found in people's **gardens and yards**.

Many of the species in both *Tegenaria* and *Eratigena* are **not native** to the USA, but to Europe instead. They migrated over with humans, some as early as the 1600s.

The representative of the genus *Tegenaria* most commonly



found in Utah is *Tegenaria domestica* (teh-jen-AIR-ee-uh doh-MESS-tih-kuh; Barn Funnel Weaver).

The representative of the genus *Eratigena* in Utah is *Eratigena agrestis* (air-uh-TIH-jen-uh aa-GREZ-tiss).

These spiders are commonly called Hobo Spiders, and are **only** found in **northern Utah**.



Approximately **29 years ago** a study was released stating rabbits that had bitten by male hobo spiders underwent severe effects from the venom, (including necrotic decay of their flesh). In all that time **since then not one person** has been able to come forward and say: that they were healthy before the bite, then developed the normal hobo bite symptoms, and produce the spider that supposedly bit them. This is leading scientist and researchers to say that the hobo bite is **most likely not medically significant**.

Funnel weavers are **docile, non-aggressive** spiders, despite some common misconceptions about them, and are not likely to bite. They will bite if they feel threatened and have no avenue of escape before them. This occurs most often while gardening or working in wood piles.

Sources:

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